

## Plants

No plants currently listed or candidates for listing are known to occur on public land in the area.

Presence of three sensitive plants was revealed during a field inventory. Two members of the milkvetch family, Astragalus spatulatus and A. jejunus, are associated with calcareous soil and rock outcrops in Caribou and Bear Lake counties. A. spatulatus is found in two proposed Research Natural Areas, Dairy Hollow and Pine Gap. The third plant, Salicornia rubra, is a pickleweed found in salt seeps near Stump Creek in Caribou County. No protection or designated areas are planned for A. jejunus or S. rubra; however, a monitoring plan for each will be initiated to determine trend. The same management strategy will be initiated for other plants as they are discovered.

## RECREATION AND VISUAL RESOURCES

The public land within the PRA provide important recreation opportunities throughout the seven-county region in southeastern Idaho. The public land opportunities are diverse and supplement other agency lands such as the Caribou National Forest, Idaho State Parks, and Grays Lake National Wildlife Refuge.

The public land generally add another dimension to recreation opportunities available by providing unrestricted settings for a variety of dispersed activities. Activities now occurring on public land include hunting, fishing, picnicking, camping, ORV use, sightseeing, float and power boating, hang gliding, horseback riding, snowmobiling, cross-country skiing and others. Most of these activities are dispersed throughout the PRA. No precise visitor use data are available for the public land because comprehensive studies have not been conducted. However, secondary information related to hunting and fishing was compiled from Idaho Fish and Game Department counts along with other data to estimate visitor use for selected activities. These estimates are shown in Table 3.4.

The recreation opportunities available on the public land can be identified and classified with a system called the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS). This system has been adopted by the BLM and U.S. Forest Service. It is generally designed to classify lands along a recreational setting continuum ranging from large, undeveloped, low use areas to highly developed and intensively used areas. Public land in the PRA are generally small blocks and scattered tracks of land which fall only within the "roaded natural and rural classes". These classes are in the mid range of the continuum. One exception is the Petticoat Peak WSA, which contains primitive and semi-primitive settings. Management

considerations for the WSA are not evaluated in detail in this RMP because the wilderness status has yet to be decided by the U.S. Congress. Because of the narrow range of ROS classes in the PRA, they are not analyzed in detail in this RMP.

TABLE 3.4  
RECREATION VISITOR USE ESTIMATES

| Activity                  | Visitor Use Days<br>BLM-administered Lands |
|---------------------------|--|
| Big Game Hunting          | 18,630 1/                                  |
| Fishing                   | 34,700 2/                                  |
| Off-Road-Vehicle Use      | 5,050 3/                                   |
| Hang gliding              | 200  |
| Float Boating             | 120  |
| Snowmobiling              | 2,700                                      |
| Cross-country Skiing      | 600  |
| Downhill Skiing           | 10,000 4/                                  |
| Camping (Developed Sites) | 7,600                                      |

1/ Estimated from Idaho Department of Fish & Game statistics for 1985 season which are attributable to public land.

2/ Estimated from 1975 Idaho Department of Fish & Game statistics.

3/ Includes motorcycle, 4-wheel drive, and all-terrain-vehicles

4/ The 1984-85 Caribou Ski Area data. Closed during 1985-86 season.

Outdoor recreation resources on public land attract visitors from local communities and nearby states, particularly Utah. The major attractions include outstanding fishing, hunting, and snowmobiling opportunities throughout the region. The public land in the PRA, while not containing the major recreation attractions, do play a significant role in the regional recreational setting. They provide access to other government lands and can be leased or acquired for recreation related projects by State and local agencies, and offer numerous opportunities for recreation close to cities and towns throughout the region.

Leases and patents have been issued for projects and uses under the Recreation and Public Purposes Act. They include the Bannock County Sheriff's rifle range, two park extensions for the City of Pocatello, two Idaho Department of Fish and Game Department fishing access sites at Wiregrass Reservoir and Twin Lakes, an outdoor classroom area for the Cre-Act Corporation, a Boy Scout Camp, and the Bear Lake and Indian Rock State Parks. The Indian Rocks State Park has been closed since 1980. The patent is being reviewed to determine how the Park and associated lands will be handled. Recreation-related permits have been issued to use public land for the Caribou Ski Area, a cross-country ski yurt system, and several outfitting and guiding businesses.

The Caribou Ski Area is presently operated by the Northland Financial Corporation under a permit issued by the BLM. The ski area provides downhill skiing for an estimated 25,000 skiers each year. The owners intend to expand the facility by adding an additional lift and ski run. During the winter of 1985-86 the facility did not operate because of difficulties in obtaining liability insurance, a major problem currently affecting the recreation industry.

The yurt system is operated cooperatively by the City of Pocatello Parks and Recreation Department, Idaho State University, and Pocatello Nordic Ski Association. The system provides overnight facilities for nordic skiers.

Several commercial hunting guides and outfitters presently operate on public land within the PRA. BLM issues commercial special recreation permits, generating revenue from fees paid by outfitters.

Physical and legal access to recreation resources on public land is considered a major problem in the PRA. Public lands are scattered throughout, and access through adjacent private lands either is not available or has been closed. Access is considered a limiting factor for recreational use of the public land. As demand for public land recreation opportunities increase, easement acquisition will become more and more important.

The PRA has six BLM semi-developed camping areas capable of accommodating about 400 people. Facilities that are provided include toilets, tables, and fire grills. New facilities were installed at the Goodenough Creek access site in 1985. Facilities at the five other areas are in fair condition. Current recreation budgets for BLM indicate that facilities may deteriorate further due to lack of adequate maintenance and upgrading funds.

ORV use occurs on public land throughout the PRA. Motor vehicles generally provide a means of transportation for hunting, fishing, sightseeing, and other recreation activities. Recreational ORV use has become increasingly popular, particularly on public land around Pocatello. These lands offer a place close to Pocatello where trail bikes, motorcycles, all-terrain-vehicles, and 4X4 vehicles can be used. ORV designations have been made within the Bannock County portion of the PRA (see Pocatello Off-Road-Vehicle Plan, 1980). The remaining lands have not been subject to the designation process which is part of this RMP. A few emergency ORV closures or limitations have been made, mainly to protect wintering big game. These closures usually occur during the winter months and prohibit snowmobile use.

ORV designations on public land have three basic categories. They are open, closed, and limited. The limited category may restrict season of use, type of vehicle, where a vehicle is allowed, and whatever combination may be needed to protect a particular resource value. The

current ORV designations in the PRA are listed in Table 3.5.

TABLE 3.5  
PRESENT OFF-ROAD-VEHICLE DESIGNATIONS  
POCATELLO RESOURCE AREA

| <u>Designation</u> | <u>Acres</u> |
|--------------------|--------------|
| Open               | 198,350      |
| Closed             | 320          |
| Limited            | 65,811       |
| Total:             | 264,481      |

According to the 1983 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, there is a long term need in the seven-county area for more developed recreation facilities. The major facility needs where BLM could be a supplier include campgrounds, picnic areas, and boat access sites. Only a small part (less than one percent) of the projected need could be met if all the identified BLM recreation sites were developed to capacity.

To be responsive to projected increases in recreational use and demands, BLM has identified key areas within the PRA where intensive management is needed to maintain recreation opportunities and related resource values. These areas are called Special Recreation Management Areas (SRMAs) and include the Blackfoot River System (16,000 acres) and Pocatello Front (32,532 acres). The two SRMAs comprise about 18 percent of the PRA. The remaining 82 percent, or 215,949 acres, is identified as an Extensive Recreation Management Area, where significant recreation opportunities and problems are limited to individual sites rather than larger areas of public land. Table 3.6 shows these management areas and the major developed and undeveloped BLM recreation sites.

The Blackfoot River SRMA includes public land along the Blackfoot River and Wolverine Creek. Semi-developed access and camping areas have been constructed within the drainage of historic use sites. Fishing has been the major attraction in the past, and developments have focused on minimizing environmental damage and accommodating increased use.

The 34-mile segment of the Blackfoot River, below the reservoir, has gained notoriety over the past few years for its whitewater boating. Excellent intermediate boating opportunities exist for 23 miles from the Blackfoot Reservoir Dam down to the Trail Creek Bridge. From Trail Creek to a point about two miles past the confluence with Wolverine Creek, expert kayaking opportunities exist in an 11-mile segment. This whitewater resource draws rafters, canoeists and kayakers from Pocatello, Blackfoot, and Idaho Falls. The major limiting factor to whitewater boating on the Blackfoot River is the control of water releases from the Dam for irrigation. Flows below 185 cubic feet per second (cfs) make boating impossible.

TABLE 3.6  
RECREATION MANAGEMENT AREAS  
AND  
BLM DEVELOPED AND UNDEVELOPED USE SITES

| Management Area/Site            | (D) Developed<br>(U) Undeveloped | Primary Recreation<br>Activities                                |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|---|
| <u>Blackfoot River SRMA 1/</u>  |                                  |   |
| Graves Creek                    | D                                | Camping, fishing  |
| Cutthroat Trout                 | D                                | Camping, fishing  |
| Sagehen Flat                    | D                                | Camping, fishing  |
| Wolverine (2 sites)             | D                                | Camping, fishing, picnicking                                    |
| Upper Blackfoot River           | U                                | Camping, fishing  |
| Trail Creek Bridge              | U                                | Camping, fishing, whitewater<br>boat launch                     |
| Morgan's Bridge                 | U                                | Camping, fishing, whitewater<br>boat launch                     |
| <u>Pocatello Front SRMA 1/</u>  |                                  |   |
| Blackrock Canyon                | U                                | Camping, picnicking   |
| Chinks Peak Hang gliding Access | U                                | Hang gliding, trail   |
| Blackrock Canyon Winter Trails  | U                                | Cross-country skiing  |
| Moonlight Mountain              |                                  | Picnicking  |
| Caribou Ski Area                | 3/ D                             | Downhill skiing   |
| Nordic Ski Yurt                 | 3/ D                             | Cross-country skiing  |
| <u>Pocatello ERMA 2/</u>        |                                  |   |
| Dike Lake Campground            | D                                | Camping, boating, fishing                                       |
| Goodenough Creek                | D                                | Multiple use trailhead,<br>camping, picnicking, trail<br>riding |
| Harkness Canyon                 | U                                | Multiple use trailhead,<br>camping                              |
| Walker Creek Loop Trail         | U                                | Multiple use trailhead,<br>trail riding                         |
| Black Canyon (Bear River)       | U                                | Camping, picnicking, white-<br>water boat access                |
| Fish Haven Creek                | U                                | Camping, picnicking, hunting                                    |
| Yago Creek                      | U                                | Camping, picnicking   |
| Left Hand Fork                  | U                                | Camping, picnicking   |
| Heart Mountain Spring           | U                                | Camping, picnicking   |

- 1/ SRMA: Special Recreation Management Area  
2/ ERMA: Extensive Recreation Management Area  
3/ Under special recreation permit.

The Pocatello Front SRMA includes public land surrounding Pocatello. They are primarily located in the West Bench, Chinks Peak, Blackrock Canyon, Camelback, North Pocatello, South Pocatello, and Moonlight Mountain areas. The major recreation activity requiring intensive management is ORV use, primarily because of the increased interest in the sport and the potential it has for resource damage. Other recreation activities in the SRMA include cross-country and downhill skiing, hang gliding, hunting, picnicking, and others.

Several hundred miles of roads and trails suitable for ORV use exist in the area. The majority of these roads and trails are in fairly good condition, but in some localized areas ORV impacts are evident--primarily in the form of vegetative disturbance, soil rutting, and erosion. These problems are occurring in the heavy use areas around Pocatello.

### Visual Resources

Aesthetic values of the public land have become increasingly important to the American public over the past several years. These values have been reflected in the planning and management of the public land through BLM's Visual Resource Management System. The System establishes criteria for the identification and classification of scenic quality and the degree of public concern toward that quality, and defines management objective classes for alteration of the visual resource. The classes indicate the overall significance of the visual environment by showing the degree of acceptable change within a landscape and setting forth standards and measures necessary to reduce or eliminate visual impacts. The following is a description of the four management classes found in BLM's Visual Resource Management System and where they are currently identified in the PRA:

Class I - The objective of this class is to preserve the existing character of the landscape. Areas in this class provide a landscape setting that appears unaltered by man and include 11,338 acres in the Petticoat Peak and Worm Creek WSAs. The Class I rating is temporary since it is based on the potential for wilderness designation. The Class I rating would remain if the areas were designated; if not, the class may be changed.

Class II - The objective of this class is to retain the existing character of the landscape. The level of change to the landscape features must be low and may not attract attention of the casual observer. This class includes 99,055 acres of landscapes of high scenic value that are sensitive to change.

Class III - The objective of this class is to partially retain the existing character of the landscape. The level of change to the landscape features must be moderate but must not dominate the view of the casual observer. Changes should repeat the basic elements found in the predominant features of the characteristic landscape. This class

includes 141,266 acres of land in scenic middleground areas that would be sensitive to alteration without mitigating measures.

Class IV - The objective of this class is to provide for management activities which require major modification of the existing character of the landscape. The level of change may be high. Changes may dominate the view and be the major focus of viewer attention. However, every attempt will be made to minimize impacts. This class includes 12,822 acres of land in background or already modified landscapes when sensitivity to alteration would not be a major concern.

An inventory of scenic quality and landscapes that are sensitive to change has identified those areas which should be managed to protect scenic values. These areas include Wolverine Creek, Blackfoot River, Blackfoot Reservoir, Stump Creek, Schmid Ridge, Soda Hills, lands adjacent to Bear Lake, Bear River below Alexander Reservoir, Oneida Narrows, Petticoat Peak, Garden Creek Gap, lands surrounding Pocatello, land parcels near major travel routes, and lands adjoining National Forest.

There is a strong seasonal aspect to the visual resource. Fall colors of red and yellow are brilliant along the creeks and bottoms and throughout forested areas.

Management objectives for the four classes are met through the application of standard operating procedures. Procedures include a review of individual projects for impacts on visual resources and measures that will be taken to meet the class objectives. In some cases, actions may be taken to enhance the visual quality and bring a specific site up to the standards of this class in which it is located.

## NATURAL HISTORY

At present no Research Natural Areas (RNAs) have been established in the PRA. RNAs are sites where natural processes are allowed to predominate and are protected for the primary purposes of research and education. Seven areas have been examined by the Idaho Natural Areas Coordinating Committee and have been recommended for formal identification and management. These areas were identified because of their relatively natural vegetative communities. The seven RNAs and their sizes are shown in Table 3.7.

TABLE 3.7  
RESEARCH NATURAL AREAS

| <u>Proposed Research Natural Areas</u> | <u>Acres</u> |
|--|--------------|
| Cheatbeck Canyon                       | 100          |
| Dairy Hollow                           | 45           |
| Formation Cave                         | 70           |
| Oneida Narrows                         | 617          |
| Pine Gap                               | 232          |
| Robbers Roost Creek                    | 400          |
| Travertine Park                        | 30           |
| Total:                                 | 1,494        |

The following information provides a summary of features and brief description of each proposed RNA:

#### Cheatbeck Canyon

This 100-acre proposed RNA contains an excellent mixed stand of boxelder and bigtooth maple, surrounded on the south and east by Douglas-fir forests and on the north by sagebrush/grass. These two maples, boxelder and bigtooth maple, occur naturally only in the southeastern part of the State. Aside from a narrow band along the Bear River in Oneida Narrows, this proposed RNA would provide the only stand of boxelder in any proposed or established RNA and probably the best example of bigtooth maple.

#### Dairy Hollow

Most of the rangeland in the extreme southeastern corner of Idaho has been affected by grazing. The BLM picked this 45-acre tract in Dairy Hollow because of the good stand of Wyoming sagebrush and needle-and-thread grass habitat type. Only one other proposed RNA, in another geomorphic province, has this habitat type, and on that one, the stand is small. In addition, the area contains interesting columns and bluffs of conglomerate capped with red sandstone. Several of these have been used by hawks as nest sites. One ferruginous hawk nest with three young was located in the area. A rare plant, Astragalus spatulatus (spoonleaf milkvetch), also occurs within the area proposed.

#### Formation Cave

This is an area of travertine terraces, that were once ponds, and broad, gently sloping outwash plains. A stream once crossed the area and probably filled some of the ponds, but the water has been diverted for irrigation and only a small area along the east boundary has any standing water. The terraces have pristine stands of bitterbrush, Nevada bluegrass, and shrubby cinquefoil due to their inaccessability to livestock and motor bikes. Along the old stream channel and where the water table is close to the surface, water birch is predominate.